

# critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current NYC & LA Entertainment Scenes

## New York Theatre Openings This Week

Whistler's Grandmother-President 12/11/52. Anthony Parella presents Josephine Hull in a new comedy by Robert Finch. With Alan Carney, Lonny Chapman, Lou Gilbert. Directed by ThomaJan, settings and lighting by Leo Kerz.

## Digests of Current NY Theatre Reviews-more inside

Renaud-Barrault product of Hamlet- Ziegfeld 12/1/52. Unanimous cheers for final offering of French repertory company recorded by NY daily critics. Andre Gide French translation of classic shows Jean Louis Barrault in his most brilliant role in the group of plays shown here, all agreed. Except for some minor reservations production was recommended as one of the most important, and unusual Shakespeare production in years, Matthews, subbing for Atkinson, Times, tabbed it a strange, exciting, thrilling evening for an American. Except for fact that second act lasts 1½ hours he had nothing but thanks. Kerr, Herald Tribune, found Ophelia's mad scene and Hamlet's father's ghost sequence more brilliantly handled than he had ever seen before. Either bad make up or lighting made Barrault's early appearance look more like Charles Addams Hamlet, Kerr complained. French adaption has beauty of clarity and grace, commented Chapman, News, while star's portrayal was considered resourceful and highly individual. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, thought startling style shows once more how endless and complex the legitimate interpretations of the tragedy. If playgoer expected something revolutionary he may be disappointed, points out Watts, Post, but those who sensibly want to see how a world masterpiece would fare at hands of eminent French actors will be richly rewarded. As a job of physical production, this show is the least impressive, but it leaves no doubt that the French visitors are the treat of our theatrical season, Watts applauded.

I've Got Sixpence-Barrymore 12/2/52. Confused and confusing is how NY newspaper reviewers summed up John van Druten's serious play. While the author's script, presented by Gertrude Macy and Walter Starcke, was panned by most NY critics, most cheered Viveca Lindfors both for her beauty and her acting ability. Boris Aronson's sets almost made him the hero of the evening for Kerr, Herald Tribune. Trouble, suggests Atkinson, is that van Druten wrote a little play about a big subject. Though Lindfors stirs the placid little play, toward the end the play is not quite substantial enough to be stirred by anything, he noted. Some playgoers may find drama profound, beautiful and inspiring, but Chapman, News, was unhappy to report the piece, so earnestly written and admirably played, touched him only once or twice. Several moments contain fine theatre, but most of it is downright pretentious. Mortimer, subbing for the still ailing Coleman, Mirror, frankly didn't understand what was going on. Patricia Collinge and Vicki Cummings were credited with fine performances by most; while critics believed Edmond O'Brien had an impossible part. McClain, Journal American, disagreed. Compelling story, wonderfully well performed that holds you despite yourself was how he found the production which will be remembered for introducing Lindfors to Broadway.

See the Jaguar-Cort 12/3/52. Sheaffer, Eagle, sole NY critic to find merit in N. Richard Nash's new play, produced by Lemuel Ayers in association with Helen Jacobs and starring Arthur Kennedy. Despite scripts faults, play is filled with a quality of moral fervor and heartfelt intensity that make it worthy and provocative he praised. Remainder found symbolism so obscure as to be meaningless. Though everyone concerned works their head off, Atkinson, Times, reports end result is verbose and says nothing. Without the over insistent symbolism the author might have made a fresh, vivid, believable Western, sighs Kerr, Herald Tribune. Chapman, News, panned that everything was onstage but a play, while Watts, Post, marked it off as sound and fury, signifying nothing. Cast and production look entrancing, but critics agreed that actors speeches were too confusing to follow.

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' Off Broadway '

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Equity Library Theatre presents Sidney Kingsley's The World We Make Dec 10-14... Amato Opera Theatre presents La Traviata weekends until Dec 21. Group closes for brief rest during holidays and re-opens early in January...Dobbs Ferry, NY, Playhouse opening bill of Peg O' My Heart won okay of Billboard reviewer which noted project looks to have been launched on a long term venture...Gordon Reilly, Charles Best's new play being produced at Originals Only, deserves a hearing, comments Rice, Post. Though written with honesty and taste, drama editor feared script was merely a news report lacking in dramatic action. John Glennon won praises in title role, while Rice thought Gertrude Slack did fairly well in a role she was miscast.

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' Vaudeville '

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Current Palace vaudeville show headlines Harry Savoy, comedian. Supporting acts include The Barrys, Leroy Brothers and marionettes, George Kirby, Russ and Joy Sobey and Five Amandis...Danny Kaye two-a-day—at Palace starting Jan 18 will include Darvas & Julia, Piero Brothers, Three Dunhills and Marquis & Chimps. Another act is still to be signed.

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' Book Notes '

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New anthology of American Drama edited by Eric Bentley, New Republic, published by University of Denver Press entitled "Modern Repertoire"...8th volume of Dan Blum's "Theatre World" recommended by Rice, Post, as a necessity to professionals and theatre goers alike...Sean O'Casey's "Rose and Crown", the most recent autobiographical volume, enjoyed by Chapman, News. The Irish author, the critic opines, is the most insufferable snob of this century. But as a writer he can teach all of us something about the English language.

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' TV & Radio Notes '

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Vanderbilt Theatre, rented by ABC-TV, will be available for theatre productions again...CBS Radio due to broadcast Vivien Leigh series of half hour dramatizations of the world's best plays...Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy have promised NBC that they will confine their activities almost exclusively to broadcasting for 2 years if "Marriage" series proves successful...NBC signed Robert E. Sherwood to write 9 original plays for TV...Vivienne Segal, Pal Joey, will star in TV situation comedy series being prepared by Frank Gabrielson and Carol Irwin...Danton Walker, News, and Joe Laurie, Jr, Variety, may have 2 TV shows on air. First is WPIX, NY, plan for "Broadway Columns of the Air" which would include programs by Walker, Laurie, Ed Sullivan, Frank Farrell and Dorothy Kilgallen.

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! Green Room Department !

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**KERR ON CRITICS...**Drama critics should be observers, defines Kerr, Herald Tribune, in 1952 Theatre Annual. If a given play moves an audience the critic should ask why. Though a critic may be brilliant, his brilliance quickly turns to sophistry the moment he chooses to work apart from, and without complete dependence on, the initial verdict of the audience. Actually Kerr sees no solution to the extreme power of the present critics. This power stems from audience habit plus economic factors.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...**Musical repertory theatre devoting itself to modern works of broad appeal might be even more successful than drama repertory group, suggests Watt, News. Ready made organization seems to be forming in London company of Porgy and Bess which already has rehearsed Gruenberg's The Emperor Jones and Gershwin's 125th Street...NYC may have a new theatre building by 1955, predicts Morehouse, WT&S.

**WHERE'S BETTE...**Two's Company, which was scheduled to open Dec 4, but not to be reviewed by the critics until Dec 15, postponed its Dec 4 opening. "The doctors who are attending the star will advise the management when she is able to go on," the producers' statement explaining her laryngitis stated. McCord, Herald Tribune, reports that star's illness is real excuse for opening being delayed. Often, he noted, this is given as a cover up excuse.

**COLUMN TIPS...**Affairs of State author Louis Verneuil left no will, and his estate is being claimed by 4 different women, reports Lyons...Sobol's Show Business cabinet includes: Secretary of the Nervy: Mike Todd...Secretary of Offense: B.S. Pulley...Secretary of Straigh: George Burns...Fattorney General: Jack E Leonard.

**CRITICS HEADS...**Contents of critic's head, as pictured by Searle, Theatre Newsletter, includes: deadlines, faith, hope, charity, bias, personality, taste, memory, tolerance, digestion, recollection, anxiety to be read, power, ambition, lack of thirst, love of crowds, knowledge of theatre, command of telephone, consideration of public, punctuality, punctuation, and the ability to read and write.

**MAIL BAG...**Suspension of Winter season of NYC Theatre Company at City Center drew protest letters to Morehouse, WT&S and Times Drama editor. Greater tragedy than suspension due to lack of sufficient funds to carry through the season, notes a Times reader is the apathy of the public for whom the Center exists. The fact that as few as 6 letters of protest had been sent in is appalling. Another Times reader suggests that programs weren't really "popular priced" at a \$3.60 top. \$1 tariff suggested to remedy situation.

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! Theatre News Round Up !

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Sylvia Sidney and Romney Brent will replace Betty Field and Burgess Meredith as full cast of The Fourposter starting Dec 22...Representatives of League of NY Theatres, NY Fire and Housing Departments have "agreed in principle" on the revision of 21 bills altering the city building code to encourage theatre construction...Isabel Bigley returned to Guys and Dolls, Marian Burke subbed...John Gerstad rejoined The Male Animal after directing The Seven Year Itch...Actors' Fund annual drive for funds from playgoers opens Dec 29. Goal of \$250,000. "Main Street to Broadway" NY sequences being shot in and around Martin Beck Theater...Registration for Dec 15 term of American Theatre Wing now open...Jean-Louis Barrault, Katina Paxinou Alex Minotis, Rosamund Gilden and Dr. Felix Ibanez discussed "Is Foreign Theatre Superior to Our Own" at Greater NY ANTA Chapter monthly forum...After Theatre Autographing party was held at Brentano's to launch Dan Blum's "Great Stars of the American Stage"...The Deep Blue Sea will not play Dec 24, enabling Margaret Sullivan to spend evening with her children.



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LA Theatre

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Affairs of State at Carthay Circle will play 2 performances New Year's Eve at 7 and 10 pm...Carthay Circle has arranged a tieup with Diners Club by which credit cards of latter group will be accepted...Ann Nelson is new heroine in Theater Mart's long run The Drunkard... Gallery Stage production of The Maid and the Martian ends Dec 21...Turnabout Theatre, which reopens Dec 26, charging \$9.60 for New Year's Eve show...Hollywood Actors 2 run performance at Coronet of Romeo and Juliet rated as well done by Greene, Examiner.

Julie Harris added the LA daily drama critics to her list of admirers after her opening in I Am A Camera at the Biltmore. Several commented that without her fine characterization the prize winning John van Druten adaption of the Christopher Isherwood stories would have been a bore. Schallert, Times, was disappointed at the script and some of the supporting performances, but thoroughly enjoyed Harris amazing resourceful performance. Bongard, News, joined in panning performance of Charles Cooper in the William Prince role. Carroll, Herald Express, rated show as one of most unusual of the year...Player's Ring revue Look, Ma I'm Dancin' enjoyed by LA critics. Bongard, News, predicted lively musical should be around for a long time. Greene, Examiner, praised group's winning formula of hitching talent to good material for the West Coast debut of the George Abbott NY show of a few seasons ago. Kathleen Freeman won top acting honors in comedy lead.

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Digests of Current NY Theatre Reviews

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Time Out for Ginger-Lyceum 11/26/52. Weekly reviewers generally enjoyed Ronald Alexander's comedy presented by Shepard Traube and Gordon Pollock, and starring Melvyn Douglas. Keating, Cue, and Gibbs, New Yorker, panned it as an unfunny first try at comedy. Curious air of childishness seems to mark almost everyone connected with the proceedings, condemned the latter. Time man agreed that much of plot seems too stilly and jumbled and that perhaps the characters resemble comic strip figures, but he still found a good deal of it thoroughly amiable, and a fair amount of the show amusing. Show is much better, he concluded, when youngsters are offstage. Newsweek reviewer likewise okayed spry little comedy filled with humor, affection and an eye for domestic detail that are welcome in any Broadway season. Billboard's pewsitter spotted quite a lot of fun, plus an inventiveness and considerable tenderness in the doings of the nice, friendly family. Too many of the scenes, he complained, are gagged up strictly for laughs that don't jell with the play. Hobe, Variety, believes script was saved 2/3 way through when somewhat silly treatment of a slim farce idea was turned into a reasonably amusing and touching play. Most critics credited entire case with fine performances, Nancy Malone being singled out as a newcomer worth watching. Douglas was credited with one of smoothiest comedy jobs of his career.

Seven Year Itch- Plymouth 11/20/52. Trio of diverse opinions filed on George Axelrod. Should be scratched, panned Shipley, New Leader, who admitted obvious quality of play and exaggerated acting of Tom Ewell may make it a hit. Comforting morality that girl's one night surrender is okay and that the man can eat his cheesecake and have it too, only left critic irritated. WCBS Bill Leonard termed proceedings "delightful". Comedy expertly performed by fine cast ought to be, broadcaster predicts, one of the hits of the season. Gibbs, New Yorker, notes that some of the dialogue may not be entirely suitable for female boarding school students, but fact of life items are handled with much the same innocent charm found in Voice of the Turtle. Director John Gerstad was credited with handling an extremely difficult script with brisk intelligence.

The Deep Blue Sea- Morosco 11/5/52. Add one more con vote to Terrance Rattigan's play starring Margaret Sullavan. WFUV Kass was reminded of nothing as much as a soap opera in a dreary monotone. Critic only wonders how producers Alfred de Liagre, Jr. and John C Wilson could have decided to produce it,

